

# CHICHESTER IN THE GREAT WAR

**Second Lieutenant Arthur Garton, 24.4.1888 – 24.9.1918**  
**Nicholas Shaw**

## Introduction

Arthur Garton was a Second Lieutenant in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the Royal Sussex Regiment when he was killed in action on 24<sup>th</sup> September 1918. His name can be found at Horsham Police Station and also on the War Memorial at Billingshurst. I wanted to explore his life and background and the contribution he made in the Great War.

## Biography

Arthur Garton was born on the 24<sup>th</sup> April 1888 at Groomsland, Billingshurst. He was the son of Owen Garton and Mary Ellen Garton, formerly Rushton. Arthur was the eldest of eight children, two brothers and five sisters, plus himself and by 1914 four of his siblings were living at 74 Double Barn, West Dean.

In the 1891 Census, the family were residing at Groomsland, Billingshurst, the father Owen Garton, aged 32, his wife Mary Ellen aged 34, Arthur aged 2, Florence aged 1 and an infant daughter, 1 month old. The father worked as an agricultural labourer. His wife had been brought up in Nottingham.

When the 1901 Census came around, Arthur was working as a poultry boy for Hannah M. Bird, an elderly widow, aged 79 at Upper Wood House, Billingshurst. She was a poultry farmer and Arthur was only 13 years at the time. He was educated locally at a school in Billingshurst.

By the 1911 Census, the family was residing at 9 Daux Road, Billingshurst. Owen Garton now aged 52 was a general labourer and his son Arthur aged 22 was a bricklayer's labourer. His two brothers Hugh aged 15 and Percy aged 13 were also living at the residence.

Arthur applied for a job as a police constable with the West Sussex Constabulary on 28<sup>th</sup> June 1912 and got it. With the outbreak of the Great War, Arthur enlisted at Horsham on 14<sup>th</sup> September 1914 and joined the 11<sup>th</sup> Battalion Royal Sussex Regiment (Southdowns) and his regimental number was 643. He started off as a Private and then he was promoted to a Corporal on 29<sup>th</sup> September 1914. By 28<sup>th</sup> October 1915 he was promoted as a Lance Sergeant, and finally he was promoted to a Sergeant by the 19<sup>th</sup> February 1916. He spent this entire period in England and left for France on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1916. He took part in Richebourg



L'Avoue, Beaumont Hamel and the third battle of Ypres. He was wounded on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1916 and eventually re-joined his battalion on 14<sup>th</sup> June 1917. He stayed in France until 30<sup>th</sup> November 1917. Arthur returned home on 1<sup>st</sup> December 1917 and remained at home until 31<sup>st</sup> July 1918.

On 6<sup>th</sup> December 1917, Arthur married Annie Dorothy Garton (neé Brand) at West Dean Parish Church. Anne Dorothy Brand was 21 at the time, a spinster and her father William Brand was a confectioner. Arthur's father died on 21<sup>st</sup> November 1916 and his mother had died on 17<sup>th</sup> December 1916. At this time he was living at 56 Teville Road, Worthing, West Sussex. Arthur and Anne produce a baby daughter Doris Mary Harrison Garton on January 21<sup>st</sup> 1918.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> August 1918, he was appointed to a Commission and was promoted to Second Lieutenant in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Royal Sussex Regiment. He had previously been with the 52<sup>nd</sup> Royal Sussex Regiment since 8<sup>th</sup> February 1918. On the 24<sup>th</sup> September 1918, Arthur Garton was killed in action near Bellicourt, in the Aisne and is buried at Bellicourt Cemetery, Aisne, row 111, plot J.4. At the time of his death, his wife Anne was living at 23 Cobden Road, Worthing, West Sussex.

He is commemorated on the War Memorials at Worthing, Billingshurst and at Chichester and Horsham Police Stations.



## **Conclusion**

Arthur was only 30 years old when he died, but like many of his fellow soldiers who fought alongside him, worked his way up through the ranks to become a Second Lieutenant. He had also spent two years as a police constable before joining up which must have helped his smooth promotion up the ranks. He had spent a total of 11 months on the Western Front and had endured three major battles. He left behind a young wife and a baby daughter who would never get to know her father.

## **Sources**

[www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk) (Family details)

<https://freepages.military.rootsweb.ancestry.com/-thinblueline>

[www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org) (Cemetery details)

Kew Archives: WO339/26618

